



Committee on Government Reform

CONGRESSMAN TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN

September 2004

Spotlight on Reform

A Monthly Communications Memorandum on
Government Reform Committee Agenda and Accomplishments

Washington, D.C. –This has been a busy summer for the Government Reform Committee, from being the first House committee to hold hearings on the 9/11 Commission's recommendations to monitoring USDA's Mad Cow surveillance to examining the Iraqi reconstruction process. Chairman Tom Davis continues to lead the Committee as it pushes its reform-minded agenda on those issues most important to the American taxpayer.

No Commute? **Sign Me Up**

On July 8th, the Committee held a hearing to examine current Federal telework policy as well as the cultural issues that pose challenges to telework in order to determine why agencies are repeatedly failing to reach Congressional requirements.

Telecommuting, the use of technology to work from home or other locations instead of a central office, has

emerged as an essential management tool for the Federal Government. Benefits of telework include reducing traffic congestion and pollution, improving employee recruitment and retention, increasing productivity, and reducing the need for taxpayer-funded office space. In addition, telecommuting allows agencies and businesses to function through occurrences that can disrupt business as usual. In the post-September 11th era, continuity of operations is a paramount concern. Many Federal departments and agencies remain unprepared to operate in the event of a catastrophic event. Despite the substantial benefits, the numbers of employees eligible for telework in the Federal Government remains far below the legal requirements set by Congress four years ago.

Many managers remain unenthusiastic about allowing their employees to be out of sight during workdays. Some worry telework will worsen employee-management relations; others worry employees may abuse the policy. Our biggest challenge as we move

forward may simply be changing organizational attitudes about the possibilities technology affords managers and employees in the contemporary workplace.

U.N. Oil-for-Food: What Went Wrong?

On July 12th, Chairman Davis sent a subpoena to the legal representatives of Banque Nationale de Paris S.A. seeking all records related to the bank's work on the United Nation's "Oil-for-Food" program in Iraq. From the start of the program in 1997 until 2001, Banque National de Paris (BNP) solely controlled the escrow account in which Iraq's revenues from oil sales were deposited.

The United Nations program was designed to allow Iraq to sell oil in exchange for food and other humanitarian goods needed by the Iraqi people. However, it appears that upwards of \$10 billion of this money was misspent or embezzled – used for such "humanitarian" purposes as building palaces for Saddam Hussein, or lining the pockets of those willing to engage in under-the-table transactions with the brutal dictator.

Discovering how these billions were spent, and who was complicit in this abuse, is important in re-establishing the credibility of the United Nations and in holding to account those who took advantage of a program that should have helped millions of Iraqis.

Where's the Beef?

On July 14th, the Committee held a joint oversight hearing with the House Agriculture Committee on USDA's Expanded Surveillance Program, which is designed to detect cases of Bovine

Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as mad cow disease, in the U.S. cattle population. The Expanded Surveillance Program went into effect after the first case of BSE in the U.S. was discovered in Washington state on December 23, 2003. The Committee has conducted a seven-month investigation into USDA's response to the BSE-infected cow. The Committee was pleased by the steps USDA took to implement the Expanded Surveillance Program but will continue to monitor the program's effectiveness and adequacy of the means and methods employed by USDA to safeguard the American public from BSE.

Leveling the Playing Field

The next day, the House unanimously passed H.R. 4012, introduced by Chairman Davis and Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, which amends the District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999 to reauthorize the D.C. Tuition Assistance Program, providing limited financial assistance to D.C. high school graduates pursuing higher education opportunities in public and private colleges and universities in other States. The original legislation was signed into law in November 1999 and expires after FY2005. Given the tremendous success of the Program – freshman enrollment of D.C. high school graduates in college increased 28% from 1998 to 2002, compared to the national average of 5% – this legislation reauthorizes the Program for another five years. The program has not only helped make higher education affordable for thousands of D.C. students – it's also helped stabilize the population base in the Nation's Capital.

The Berger Investigation

On July 21st, Chairman Davis announced that the Committee intended to investigate allegations that former National Security Advisor Sandy Berger, in preparation for 9-11 Commission hearings, took highly sensitive terrorism documents from a secure reading room at the National Archives. The Government Reform Committee, which has jurisdiction over the National Archives, is the primary investigative committee in the House of Representatives.

These allegations are troubling, and it's the Committee's responsibility to find out what happened and why. While the Committee will continue to afford Berger the presumption of innocence he deserves, we will fulfill our duty to the American people to get to the bottom of this disturbing breach of trust and protocol.

Iraqi Reconstruction

The Committee conducted an oversight hearing on the US efforts to rebuild Iraq on July 22nd. This was the fourth hearing on our rebuilding efforts; a further look into the challenges faced by contractors on the ground in Iraq in supporting our troops and civilian workers in their efforts to secure and rebuild Iraq.

Government contracting is difficult enough under normal circumstances. Add in the urgency and inherent dangers of a war zone, and the challenge of acquiring urgently needed goods and services becomes quite daunting. Through this hearing we attempted to continue to separate truth from political rhetoric – and, in turn, help make sure the U.S. is coordinating contract processes in Iraq in a way that ensures success and safety.

Returning Gen. Aviation to Reagan National

On July 28th, Chairman Davis and 15 Members of Congress sent a letter asking Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge to help speed the return of General Aviation to Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport by publicly releasing the security guidelines business aircrafts will have to follow once the airport is reopened to their use.

The closure of Reagan National to general aviation has cost the region more than \$175 million. The Congressmen recognize the need for Reagan National to have a unique security plan in place, and the general aviation industry has continued to demonstrate its willingness to meet any security requirements deemed necessary by the Department. Giving the operators a head start in complying with the security plan will help speed up the process of getting general aviation back at the airport.

Moving from 'Need to Know' to 'Need to Share'

In its final report, The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States illustrated that vulnerabilities in the nation's security, aviation, immigration, and information-sharing systems were exploited to turn the nefarious plans of the terrorists into a tragic reality. On August 3rd, Chairman Davis held the first House hearing to review the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission that would bring crucial reforms to the federal government; reforms needed to improve our intelligence gathering and information sharing structures.

The Commission report has a broad array of recommendations to organize the government and promote the type of cross-agency cooperation needed to deal with the asymmetric threat of terrorism. As a nation we must be able to identify and defeat terrorist threats, to protect our critical infrastructure, mitigate cyber and physical attacks, and manage the response to attacks. Another day similar to September 11th, 2001, is one day too many.

Speak about Chesapeake: Is It Getting Healthier?

On August 20th, the Committee convened a field hearing in Hampton, Virginia, to help determine whether or not the Chesapeake Bay Program and its partners are using the best methods to measure and report progress in protecting and improving the health of the Bay.

The largest estuary in the United States, the Chesapeake Bay is a vital part of the culture and economy of the region – but it is under ongoing threat from pollution associated with the region’s population growth. Of particular concern is the low level of dissolved oxygen in the Bay’s water, which affects the health of aquatic life.

A major challenge in improving the health of the Bay is: How can progress be accurately measured? Computer modeling has shown significant reductions in the level of phosphorous and nitrogen, but data from the U.S. Geological Survey’s water samples have not confirmed that progress. The inconsistencies between modeling and sampling data raise serious questions about the true status of efforts to clean up the Chesapeake Bay. More work and more federal funds are required to get the Bay onto the road toward recovery.

Creating Secure Borders and Open Doors

On September 9th, the Committee held a hearing on the collaboration between the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of State in the establishment and implementation of U.S. visa policy. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 gave DHS the authority to set policy regarding the granting and issuance of visas; this authority had been held by State.

In August, the DHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) released a report that identified several challenges facing DHS in the implementation of the Visa Security Officer (VSO) program. Particularly, DHS OIG found that DHS faces challenges in recruiting, training, and maintaining permanent VSOs in overseas posts. At the hearing, GAO released its report on the challenges facing the two departments in regards to the Visa Biometric Program, the overseas component of U.S. VISIT. Those challenges include: the strategic use of the data being collected; the embassy and consulate workflow designs that need to be changed to optimize biometric data checks; and the ensuing facility and personnel needs that may result from workflow design changes. While the two departments have done well in certain areas, it is imperative that they increase their collaboration to address the remaining challenges in order to improve homeland security while making travel easier for legitimate visitors.

Making Networkx Work

On September 15th, the Committee conducted a second oversight hearing on Networkx, the General Services Administration’s (GSA) proposed

government-wide voice and data telecommunications program. The Committee held the initial hearing on February 26th. Since that hearing, GSA has revised its strategy in response to comments from industry, agency customers, and this Committee. This latest hearing was a part of the Committee's on-going efforts to gather information from industry and other stakeholders, including GSA, to determine whether GSA's acquisition strategy, as it has evolved from its Request for Information issued last October, will be effective in today's ever-changing telecommunications environment.

GSA's Federal Technology Service (FTS), in coordination with the Interagency Management Council (IMC), is responsible for ensuring that federal agencies have access to affordable telecommunications and networking services and solutions that meet agency mission requirements. FTS has traditionally met this responsibility through large, government-wide contracts such as the current FTS2001 contracts for long-distance and international telecommunications services and the federal wireless telecommunications contract.

Upcoming Agenda

Pirates of I.P.

On September 23rd, the Committee will hold a hearing on U.S. efforts to protect intellectual property abroad. The United States has a multi-agency approach to preventing international piracy of the fruits of U.S. ingenuity, which costs U.S. industry billions of dollars annually. [The U.S. Trade Representative](#), the Departments of State and Commerce work with foreign

governments to improve laws protecting intellectual property and the enforcement of those laws. The Department of Justice works with foreign governments to prosecute those responsible. The Committee will examine the effectiveness of these efforts and possible improvements.

Implementing 'Need to Share'

The recommendations of the 9/11 Commission will be the Committee's main focus during the month of September. Government Reform was the first House committee to hold hearings on the Commission to gain a broad perspective on its recommendations. Now, working closely with House leadership and other committees, it's time to legislate.

The key to success in implementing these proposals is making sure Congress is not simply repackaging what the Federal government has now; Congress must avoid merely creating another layer of bureaucracy. The government needs legislation that will eliminate the impediments preventing better and more accurate sharing and analysis between federal agencies, between federal, state and local governments, and between the private and public sectors.

Unlike much of the debate and press coverage, any potential legislation needs to focus more than just *intelligence* information per se. The realm of information that's not being adequately shared is not merely the province of the CIA or FBI or NSA. Nor is it encompassed by the public sector alone. What about information on public health coordination between federal, state and local providers? What about the fact that the private sector owns and operates 85

percent of the nation's critical infrastructure?

The Committee has been taking a hard look at government organization challenges. Part and parcel of moving from a system of "need to know" to "need to share" is the need to restructure the Executive Branch to match 21st Century needs and requirements rather than the continued use of security institutions designed half a century ago to win the Cold War.

The Committee held several hearings on the need for Executive Reorganization Authority, which expired in 1984. The authority, which existed off and on for a period of 50 years, gives Presidents the ability to submit Executive Branch reorganization proposals to the Congress for a guaranteed, up or down vote. In doing so, Executive Branch reorganizations could come before Congress without getting buried in the congressional committee jurisdictional turf battles that have spelled the demise of many governmental reorganization proposals in recent history. The obsolete and duplicative nature of the federal bureaucracy is the single greatest impediment to improving information sharing.

Currently, there are no incentives for sharing information; incentives needed to strike the right balance between security and information sharing. Future legislation should strengthen information security within the federal government, and improve and expand the voluntary framework for sharing critical infrastructure information between the public and private sectors.

Additional reforms should include: pay and benefits flexibility for law enforcement employees; an accelerated

appointment process for national security officials; an improved and accelerated security clearance process; and other innovative solutions to enhance homeland security.

The ability of Congress to implement needed homeland security reform is essential during this hour of danger; however, such reform must be done in a deliberate manner. Hasty changes to our government will provide no added protection to this nation. While absolute security is impossible in a democratic society, the Committee's end goal is to provide the government with enough tools to decrease the probability that any of our citizens will become another victim of terrorism or have to experience another horrible day like September 11th.

You've Got Mail

The Committee is optimistic the House will consider H.R. 4341, The Postal Accountability and Enhancement Act of 2004, later this month. Unanimously approved by the Committee in May, the legislation is based on recommendations from the President's Commission on the Postal Service and the Committee's Special Panel on Postal Reform. These recommendations call for a restructuring of the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) operations to make it more efficient and help avoid frequent rate increases.

The bill gives postal management and employees the tools to adapt and survive in the face of challenges caused by changing technology and a dynamic communications marketplace. Under the legislation, the Postal Service will compete on a level playing field, under many of the same terms and conditions faced by its private sector competitors, albeit with stronger controls, oversight,

and limitations in recognition of its governmental status. These tools will help USPS avoid what the General Accountability Office (GAO) calls a “financial death spiral.”

D.C. Students **Deserve Better**

The Committee has tentatively scheduled an oversight hearing on the District of Columbia Public School (DCPS) system for early October. DCPS has been plagued by oversight problems, declining enrollment, crumbling facilities, escalating violence, and poor academic achievement. The most recent example was the case of Eastern High School’s inability to open its doors for class on the first day of school due to computer failures. The Committee hopes to examine the organizational structure of DCPS, including the role of the Mayor, Council, Chief Financial Office, School Board, and the new Superintendent in overseeing the schools. The inability of public school officials to manage schools and programs effectively leaves parents no option other than to move out of D.C., an unaffordable choice for lower income families, or enroll their children in higher performing schools through the aid of the D.C. School Choice program. Those should not be the only choices for families; they should be able to rely on the school system.



**Subcommittee on
Energy Policy,
Natural Resources &
Regulatory Affairs**

On July 1st, the Small Business Administration withdrew its March 19th proposed rule to restructure small business size standards. This action was in response to public comments, including Chairman Ose's May 17th comment letter.

On July 7th, the Subcommittee held a follow-up hearing to further discuss options to address high gasoline prices. The hearing was entitled, "Driving Down the Cost of Filling Up." Witnesses included five Federal policy officials: Guy Caruso, Administrator, Energy Information Agency, Department of Energy (DOE); Mark Maddox, Acting Assistant Secretary for Fossil Energy, DOE; Jeffrey Holmstead, Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation, Environmental Protection Agency; Jim Wells, Director, Natural Resources and Environment, GAO; and, William Kovacic, General Counsel, Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The FTC announced its investigation of the impending closure of the Bakersfield refinery in California.

On July 20th, the Subcommittee held a follow-up hearing on small business relief, entitled "What is the Administration's Record in Relieving Burden on Small Business? - Part II." The hearing was held jointly with the Small Business Subcommittee on Regulatory Reform and Oversight. Witnesses included three Administration policy officials: John D. Graham, Administrator, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget (OMB); Jesus Delgado-Jenkins, Acting Assistant Secretary for Management and Budget & Chief Financial Officer, Department of the Treasury; and Felipe Mendoza, Associate Administrator, Office of Small Business Utilization, GSA. After being invited to testify, Treasury and GSA accelerated their implementation of the 2002 Small Business Paperwork Relief Act (SBPRA).

In September, the Subcommittee will be holding a follow-up hearing (to its May 18th hearing) to further discuss maximizing private sector participation in transportation. The Department of

Transportation is expected to testify as well as additional private sector operators.



Subcommittee on Civil Service & Agency Organization

The Subcommittee held two hearings in July. On July 13th, the Subcommittee held its second hearing on Federal hiring this summer titled, “The Federal Hiring Process II: Shortening the Long and Winding Road.” This hearing continued to explore the need for improvements in the Federal hiring process, whether agencies are using recently granted hiring flexibilities, the frustrations applicants face in applying for a Federal position, and what is currently being done to streamline the process and make the Federal Government an employer of choice for the best and the brightest.

On July 20th, the Subcommittee held a hearing addressing pay and benefits disparities within the Federal law enforcement community titled “Time to Bite the Bullet: Fixing Federal Law Enforcement Pay and Benefits.” The Subcommittee examined the Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM) findings and recommendations in its report to the Congress, “Federal Law Enforcement Pay and Benefits.”

On September 13th, the Subcommittee looked at how the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) can enhance its services to Federal employees and serve as a model for improving the performance of the U.S. health system as a whole. The areas explored are as follows: (1) ways to encourage plans to focus on high value services including preventive services and comprehensive care for common chronic conditions; (2) the impact of good health

practices on premiums; (3) a reimbursement component that allows plans to receive a premium for meeting certain high standards of quality; (4) ways to promote the use of information technology to create cost savings; (5) ways that the FEHBP can measure comparative efficacy and value of alternative preventives and treatments in a systematic way; and (6) possible avenues on how the FEHBP can better stress health literacy.



Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats & International Relations

In July, the Subcommittee held follow-up hearings on two homeland security issues. Testimony from DHS and state and local emergency response officials indicated some progress had been made since the Subcommittee's Nov. 6, 2003 hearing on public safety wireless interoperability. Standards for technology and operating protocols are clearer and more widely understood, but fragmented decision-making and a fast-evolving technological landscape makes progress toward functional interoperability still a far-distant goal. The Subcommittee also revisited the issue of visa revocation policy to determine if DHS and the State Department had made promised improvements in notifications necessary to keep unwanted aliens from entering the United States, or to identify them once they got here. Again, the Subcommittee saw some notable progress, but also noted persistent bureaucratic delay as the two Departments learn to share visa policy and implementation responsibilities.

In August, the Subcommittee followed the full Committee’s lead in holding hearings on the 9/11 Commission report, examining recommendations regarding the need for more effective

public diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim world to communicate to an increasingly hostile foreign public. Past efforts, current programs, and long term plans to convey American ideas and policies were discussed. There appears to be a struggle for the soul of public diplomacy between those who favor only traditional one-on-one methods (such as exchange programs, lectures, and libraries) versus those who see the need for mass audience advertising. The 9/11 Commission recommended more of both. A hearing was also held on the problem of over-classification noted in the Commission report. Too many secrets, too slow declassification, and tolerance for a "when in doubt, CLASSIFY!" culture were found to impede the new quantity and quality of information sharing the Commission recommended. In September, the Subcommittee convened a hearing on post-9/11 physical security improvements at civilian nuclear power facilities

Again, returning to investigations begun earlier in the Congress, the Subcommittee in September will hear testimony on federal, state and local efforts to assess the public health impact of the September 11th WTC attacks. CDC and other federal agencies are assisting New York State and city programs to monitor the health of those exposed to the smoke, particulates, and chemical contaminants resulting from the collapse of the Twin Towers. Significant increases in respiratory symptoms and diseases, particularly asthma, have been observed. At issue is the coordination of health exams, data, and care for many diverse populations - from firefighters to school children - and the articulation of lessons learned. Based on the health effects of 9/11, there are recommendations for rapid environmental testing and forward health response capabilities to be prepared for scenarios in New York and elsewhere.

The Subcommittee will convene a hearing on the 9/11 Commission's recommendations and a second hearing will be held on the scope of the United Nation's flawed Oil-for-Food program in Iraq.



Subcommittee on Government Efficiency & Financial Management

Army reserve soldiers and Department of Defense (DOD) officials testified before the Subcommittee at a series of hearings in July. Chairman Platts focused on DOD from a broad perspective with a look at the ongoing implementation of the Department's ambitious financial management overhaul, the Business Management Modernization Program.

As a follow-up to the global focus on DOD's finances, the Subcommittee held a hearing to look at one of the operational consequences of poor financial management – problems with paying activated Army Reserves. The hearing was an important part of ongoing oversight by the Government Reform Committee that began after a November 2003 GAO report identified significant pay problems for National Guard units. Chairman Platts and others requested that GAO similarly review the pay experiences of Army Reserves mobilized to active duty. Findings in the GAO Reserve case study, which were released at the hearing, mirrored the results of the National Guard study: 95% of the Reservists experienced at least one pay problem. Subcommittee staff visited the Defense Finance and Accounting Service and the Army Reserve training facility at Ft. McCoy, Wisconsin, in August to continue oversight efforts.

Chairman Platts held a hearing on July 14th to discuss possible amendments to the Inspector General Act of 1978. Current legislative proposals seek to strengthen IG independence and autonomy by limiting arbitrary or political dismissal, creating a fixed term of office, defining reasons for removal, freeing IGs from the agency appropriations process, creating a statutory basis for the government-wide IG councils, which now operate under executive order, and offering IG offices human capital management flexibility. Work on IG reforms will continue into the 109th Congress.

During September, the Subcommittee continued its focus on government financial management with a hearing to discuss the evolving role of the Chief Financial Officer in federal agencies and plans to hold a hearing to look at the implementation of a new multi-million dollar financial system at the Department of Health and Human Services.



Even though the month of August is historically considered to be a “slow” time on Capitol Hill, the Subcommittee maintained an intense pace of activity. Much of the month was spent in meetings, conducting research, and preparing for an aggressive series of oversight hearings during the month of September.

Subcommittee staff participated in a number of conferences and forums, particularly around the subject of cyber security. Additionally, Chairman Putnam’s Corporate Information Security Working Group, which reconvened for Phase II at the end of June, met in early August to report on the progress of the five

TEAMS, and set the timeline for the remainder of the Phase II effort. On September 13th, the U.S. House unanimously approved H.R. 3478, The National Archives and Records Administration Efficiency Act. On September 14th, the Subcommittee held a hearing to examine the results of the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2004 Overseas Census Test.

The Subcommittee anticipates the House moving ahead with HR 4570, which amends the Clinger-Cohen Act to enhance agency planning for information security needs, later in the month. During the rest of September, the Subcommittee will conduct three oversight hearings, including an examination of the growing challenge of computer identity theft.



On July 7th, the Subcommittee held a hearing entitled, "Part II -- Ensuring Accuracy and Accountability in Laboratory Testing: Does the Experience of Maryland General Hospital Expose Cracks in the System?" This hearing, which was a follow-up to a hearing held by the Subcommittee on May 18th, further investigated revelations concerning the release of invalid lab test results to hundreds of patients at Maryland General Hospital. This hearing also considered whether changes to the regulatory system are necessary to protect the public health from similar future occurrences.

On July 22nd, the Subcommittee held a hearing entitled, “Drugs and Security in a Post-9/11 World: Coordinating the Counternarcotics Mission at the Department of Homeland Security.” In the Homeland Security Act of 2002,

Congress made preventing drug trafficking one of the primary missions of the new Department. This hearing examined how well DHS is fulfilling that mission, and what steps it is taking to improve coordination and cooperation between its own subdivisions – such as the Border Patrol, the Coast Guard, and legacy Customs – and between DHS and other agencies. The hearing also examined the role of the counternarcotics officer tasked by the Homeland Security Act with promoting coordination and cooperation, and ensuring adequate resources for the fight against drug smuggling.

On August 2nd, the Subcommittee held a public hearing entitled, “The Poisoning of Paradise: Crystal Methamphetamine in Hawaii.” This hearing sought to examine the state of methamphetamine trafficking, production and abuse in Hawaii, and how the federal government can assist state and local authorities in combating this growing problem through law enforcement, drug treatment, and prevention programs. The hearing provided an opportunity for representatives of federal and local agencies that fight methamphetamine trafficking and experts in the treatment and prevention of methamphetamine abuse to discuss these issues and propose solutions.

On September 22nd, the Subcommittee plans to hold a hearing to review the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) Access to Recovery drug treatment program. Access to Recovery is a competitive, discretionary grant program funded by SAMHSA that will provide vouchers to clients for purchase of substance abuse clinical treatment and recovery support services. The goals of the program are to expand capacity, support client choice, and increase the array of faith-based and community-based

providers for clinical treatment and recovery support services.



Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness

On September 8th, Chairman Burton held a hearing to discuss the latest scientific research out of leading universities, such as Columbia, Johns Hopkins, Northeastern, and Carnegie Mellon, regarding the harmful effects of mercury in the human body. The Subcommittee examined the need for additional research to determine the biological basis for autism, as well as how specifically the CDC is reviewing the occurrences of this health epidemic.

In May 2004, the Institutes of Medicine (IOM) released its eighth and final report examining the hypothesis that thimerosal-containing vaccines are causally associated with autism. IOM concluded there was no such association between thimerosal-containing vaccines and autism - a marked departure from their 2001 report, which called a causal relationship “biologically plausible.” The report also recommended that no further research to evaluate this issue should be funded. However, shortly thereafter in June 2004, the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University published findings from its independent study of several strains of mice – those with a certain genetic susceptibility and those without – that were exposed to thimerosal in doses and timing which corresponds to the current pediatric immunization schedule. The research indicated that the subjects with a specific genetic susceptibility led to responses and activities that mimic those found in Autism Spectrum Disorders (including growth

retardation, social withdraw, gross motor coordination, and hyperactivity).

On September 15th, the Subcommittee on Human Rights and Wellness convened a hearing, entitled *“Conquering Obesity: The U.S. Approach To Combating This National Health Crisis.”*

The Subcommittee will convene a hearing, entitled *“Dietary Supplements: Nature's Answer to Cost Effective Preventative Medicine,”* on Wednesday, September 22, 2004, at 10:00 a.m. in Room 2154 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing will feature testimony from actress Marilu Henner, also a recognized nutrition and diet expert, as well as former professional golfer turned CBS-TV analyst, Ken Venturi.

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